# PUBLISHING AS A SPECULATION

### ABOUT ONE NOVEL OUT OF THIRTY A GREAT SUCCESS.

**Difficulty of Picking the Right Manuscript and of Making a Market for It — Books by Well Known Authors Not Sure of Success—The Fickle Public.**

Few forms of business present so tempting a front to the superficial observer as publishing. A "To Have and To Hold" or a "Rosary" means a small fortune at once. A success like "Queed" or "The Broad Highway" means a handsome gain, and such chances seem to occur every year. Do they, in fact? What is the average publisher's prospect of bringing out one of these successes?

There were published last year in the United States more than 1,400 novels; there were thirty so-called successes. For five years past the average number of novels published has been 1,000, and the average number of big sellers has remained constant at about thirty. So that if there were thirty well known publishers, such as a promising author would be likely to to, there might be one success apiece—provided each took something over thirty chances.

That is, the chance stated in percentage is 3 per cent. Now it is said that the chances at roulette are one in twenty-six, or nearly 4 per cent., and as for poker, they are probably higher. On the doctrine of chances, then, it is a highly speculative venture to attempt to produce successful books.

But, slender as a 3 per cent. chance is, the actual prospect will appear even more slender at a closer view. There remains still the possibility that the publisher may not guess well enough on the thirty novels he does publish to keep up his average. Obviously, before you can publish a big seller you must get the manuscript. Supposing that each of the thirty publishers has his fair proportion of the manuscripts offered, what are the chances that he will pick the right one?

Of the manuscripts offered him each publisher accepts between 3 and 10 per cent. Perhaps 3 would be nearer the average, but take 5 per cent. as the mean. Now, if every book accepted had an equal chance of being a seller, the percentage of chances could easily be worked out. If 3 per cent. of novels published are sellers and 5 per cent. of manuscripts offered are published, you have only to compute 3 per cent. of 5 per cent. to get your mathematical chance, which is fifteen in 10,000; that is, of every 750 manuscripts offered one is a seller.

This may seem too easy and simple to fit the facts, but you will find publishers who will accept it, and there are publishers whose experience will support it. On the other hand, there is no such simplicity as the formula suggests in the events as they occur.

In the first place, no publisher accepts manuscripts with the idea that their chances of being successes are equal. He may hope, somewhat distrustfully, that all of the season's books will be sellers, but he puts his money on one or a few. He accepts them with differing measures of confidence. Some he takes because they seems too good to let slip; some against his better judgment, because his readers and colleagues overpersuade him; some because he feel positively they ought to succeed. The risk of picking the winners in the game is high. Nobody has ever made much money by it. Henry Holt, whose experience is probably as long as that of any American publisher, says:

"There are not a dozen publishers in America who ever averaged $25,000 of clear annual profit out of publishing widely advertised books; I doubt if there are six; I should not be surprised if there were not one."

Admitting that the search for big sellers is a precarious business, what is to be said for publishing in general? This, that it is a highly speculative occupation. It is in its nature to be so. Not because it rests ultimately upon ideas, which are elusive, protean and not to be predicted in their behavior, but because of the practical elements which enter into all publishing.

To begin at the beginning, with the manuscript. It is a thing impossible to appraise with any accuracy. If you try to find its market value it has none. There is not and never has been a market price for a manuscript. The raw material for shoes, leather, has a price at every stage back to the hide on the steer's back. The raw material for a piano has a market price as far back as you may go. There is a market price for pictures and statues after their first sales. But manuscripts are not quoted; they do not usually change hands more than once.

But if the manuscript is difficult to appraise and its value matter of accident, or chance, or risk, the book itself offers hardly less of the element of chance. When the publisher has ventured his money on the manuscript his risks have only begun. Take the words of the head of the Macmillan Company, one of the shrewdest publishers alive.

"The publisher of a new book," he says, "unlike many other persons engaged in manufacturing produces an article for which, when manufactured, there is no actual demand. He must, therefore, not only make the book but afterward create, by methods known to the trade, a demand for it."

For books, as books, there is no demand. If a shoe manufacturer puts out a new style of shoe he may miss the market he hoped for, the new style may not take and become a fad or a fashion, but the shoes are still salable as shoes. The case is quite different with books. The demand, such as it is, is not for books as such but for books of designated titles, the work of specific authors.

To be sure, when the boom in novels was at its height two or three years ago there was a slight demand for the best selling book regardless of title or author and there are always a few persons who can be persuaded to buy a novel on the ground that it is "the success of the season" and "everybody is reading it." But of such demand it suffices to say so much. There is then the third element in publishing, the means of creating a demand. So far as these are under the direct control of the publisher they resolve themselves into advertising. The author of "A Publisher's Confessions" has said: "About the advertising of books, nobody knows anything." Mr. Holt says that "even in a conservative house from three-fourths of the new books more money goes to the advertising mediums, and even to the much pitied author, than to the publisher."

In all its elements, then, raw material, manufactured product and market, publishing is a hazardous and uncertain business. "But," it may be objected, "you have said nothing about the real, durable books, but have talked only about fiction." True, because fiction is not only the most numerous section of publishing but also because it is the most typical. It comes nearer what most of the people have in mind when they talk or think about publishing. The manufacture and sale of law books, medical works, school and text books are not what the average man thinks of as publishing. He thinks of the miscellaneous books which are announced and reviewed in the papers, offered for sale in book stores and sometimes bought by his clubs or his friends.

"Even if that is so," urges the objector, "you ought not to overlook the well known authors whose books are sought after. Surely there is little or no risk in publishing them."

It has been declared that as many publishers have failed through publishing the books of well known and successful authors as those of new and untried writers. Take some simple causes of this. "Successful authors often write unsuccessful books." A truism. Yes, and one easily forgotten, though every publisher of any experience has reason to remember it. There is the case of a writer of international reputation whose novel was brought out last year with great hopes of success and sold scarcely enough copies to pay for one of the many magazine advertisements which heralded it.

There was the case of a Western author whose first book sold by the hundred thousand and whose second book must have cost the publisher, who, dazzled by the first success, made munificent advance payments, dearer than any other on his list. The book may have been as charming as its predecessor, but the public could not be interested in it. Then there was the case of a brilliant Southern novelist, the glamour of whose success tempted a rival publisher to promise large advances on a new book which is said to have netted him a loss of $40,000. Doubtless the novel was as full of interest, action, suspense and sentiment as the publisher thought it was, but the day for that type of romance had passed. Then, to touch on ancient history, there was the case of Du Maurier, whose "Trilby" set all hearts a-thrilling and whose "Martians" weighted the floors of Franklin Square with unsold copies.

No, there is no insurance against risk in the previous performances of the author. For what are these performances? They are only in part the work of the author. Half, at least, is due to the condition of the public pulse, to the suggestibility or responsiveness of the public mind. Great and sudden successes depend, publishers say, no one can tell how largely upon the subtle preparedness of the community suggested in the phrase "the psychological moment." That set of complex conditions can never be duplicated. Whatever part of a book's success depends upon it is gone with the hour.

That is not to say that the fortune of a book by a well known writer is as unpredictable as that of a novice, but it is to say that risk remains. Moreover, as what has been said above will suggest, the very success of an author carries its own set of risks. It involves the risk from other publishers who may attempt to capture the author by promises of higher royalties, larger advance payments, &c., and so tempt the publisher into outlays which he cannot recoup.

The author and the author's friends will overestimate his work. It is not always the best book in a literary sense that sells best. "Prisoners of Hope," which nearly all Miss Johnston's friends consider her best work, has sold less well than any other of her novels; its sale is said to have been hardly a tenth of that of "To Have and To Hold," which they rank far below it. It is often as difficult to appraise the work of a successful author as that of an unknown.

The publisher must fall back upon "trained judgment." But is there such a trained judgment upon which he may rely to choose the successful book? After a book is out publishers can generally depend on critical opinion to appraise it fairly, but besides being fallible this method always takes time and involves the publication about which there was doubt. How fallible even critics of the published book are is plain from many cases.

The book which, except "Uncle Tom's Cabin," which was itself much belabored by critics, held the record for sales in America until lately, "Looking Backward," was so ill thought of by both critics and publisher that when the rest of the Ticknor list was bought by the Houghton Mifflin Company it was looked on doubtfully, so the story goes. Yet in a few months from that time the presses were running night and day in a vain effort to keep up with the demand.

There is an essay by Augustine Birrell, written before he became a Cabinet Minister, on "Is It Possible to Tell a Good Book From a Bad One?" The conclusion he reaches is that given time and favoring circumstances we may hope to gues right three times out of five. Yet it would be easier to find ten men competent to tell whether a book was good than one to tell whether it would succeed.

That is what makes the position of "literary adviser" so difficult. Who can name the requisites for such a post? Wide knowledge of literature, present and past; familiarity with the details of manufacture and distribution of books, a trained taste, a fine discernment—these may be assumed. But will they serve? Not necessarily. The writer can recall a man who possessed all of these yet often advised ill.

The problem recalls that of the football coach trying to make a winning team. He may handle, instruct, drill and train his men to the last notch of theory and condition, but unless they have the indefinable instinct for the game all goes for nothing. So with the literary adviser. He may have knowledge of literature, taste, understanding, familiarity with the manufacture and distribution of books, but unless he have the judgment combined of these and of expediency, timeliness, the intention of the public mood, he may fail.

In most houses where fortunate decisions are frequent the result is attained by a combination of judgments, but it will usually be found that one man, the possessor of "the instinct of the game," is the chief contributor to the good guesses. The quality is rare. One publisher stands ready to pay $10,000 a year to the man who can tell what books will succeed, and he would make a good bargain if he could find him.

Only last fall one of his shrewdest competitors, the head of a great publishing house, told of a great novel which he was about to bring out. He was planning to make a large advertising outlay upon it and confidently predicted a big success. Yet the book fell flat. Take, on the other hand, a book which has been very successful. It was by an unknown writer. It was accepted reluctantly, only because it was brought to the publishers by a successful author whose books they published. It was issued without enthusiasm, cautiously, not to say timidly. It was not advertised, it was scarcely announced. Yet it proved a great success.

Everybody knows such stories; there are volumes of them. They are often used to prove that there are no laws of publishing but that it is pure speculation. Yet it is true that the men who seriously think that publishing is mere speculation are out of their reckoning. Hazardous it may be, but no gambler need try it. No gambler has ever succeeded in it, it has been asserted.

On the contrary, publishing calls for the steadiest of minds; bold, ready for great risks when necessary, but no more reckless than a soldier or a sea captain. The glittering possibilities referred to at the beginning had as little to do with the regular business of publishing as booty has to do with the regular work of the soldier, or a rich haul in salvage has to do with the daily toil of the sailor. He will not turn his back on the chance if it comes, but he cannot shape his course with that possibility in view. Publishing, in short, is not a business for the man who wants to get rich quick.

## NEW BOOKS.

### Mr. Benson's Twenty-eighth.

It seems and is a long time since "Dodo" flashed upon a dull world. Following that surprising performance many tales, some of them not quite so gay and wonderful as others, have flowed from Mr. E. F. Benson's ever willing and never faltering pen. His latest and twenty-eighth story, "Margery" (Doubleday, Page and Company), is not complicated, not rich and devious of plot. Margery, overlooking her plain but ste,'ing cousin Walter, married Arnold, who was a scholar and the author of two brilliant books, one about Alexandria and the other about Pericles. Her whole life might have been unhappy, and so might Walter's, but Arnold while examining an ancient inscription in Athens fell over a precipice and was killed, and so, after she had been a widow for a year Margery, who was still very young, said yes to Walter, who was much better suited to her.

It is an amusing part of the story where Margery is represented as crying for a doomed kitten. She was 16 and rather old for the emotion that she exhibited, but we are sure that she afforded a picturesque exhibition and that the reader will think so; it was kind to stop short of real tragedy and to allow Walter to be in time to save the kitten from an actual plunge into the bucket. Margery was only two years older when she fell in love with Arnold and read with wildly throbbing heart his measured observations upon the genius of Theocritus, upon Corydon and Amaryllis and the oleander shade and starry flowers. After she was married she was oppressed by the fear that he did not love her enough, and we suspect that his writings left her a little cold after she had had a good dose of them (examples of them are afforded and the reader may judge of their probable effect), though she maintained always a fairly good appearance of enthusiasm for Arnold's genius and apologized for falling asleep while he was reading to her something from the book on Pericles.

It is plain that Margery spent too much time in reading Arnold's psychology. The subject did not deserve so much attention. It was not profoundly interesting, as the report of her study shows. The truth really is that Arnold was something of a prig and a bore. We are sure that his widow was happier with the unpretentious Walter, who quite simply and nobly saved the cat.

### A Dreadful Experience.

E. Everett-Green's story of "The House of Silence" (Dana Estes & Company, Boston) tells of a poet and novelist whose name was Francis Grey. As soon as Silence Desart, who was a stenographer and lady secretary, laid eyes on Francis, "she was keenly aware of some strong element of personality which defied analysis or definition and yet formed the dominant note of the man's whole being." It can hardly be thought that it was literary modesty, for he at once said to her, regarding certain of his own verses: "Yes, those are good. They throb with nature's music." He set the teakettle to boil and added: "But I have other children of my brain and fancy which I must give to the world. Verse is not the only way in which I can and must express myself. There are thoughts stirring within me which are finding expression now; but I lose them when I sit yonder at my table and take my pen in my hand." It was because of this difficulty that he had published the advertisement to which Silence Desart had responded.

The young lady, who was good looking and serious, encouraged Francis. "Yes," she said, "you will write a great novel and all the world shall acclaim it!" And with her splendid assistance he did. The story says regarding the construction of this novel: "On would go the rapid dictation, which was less dictation than the hot gushing forth of words from some hidden fount, whilst the pencil of silence flew and flew, and if gaps were left she never sought to stop the flow of words which still continued, for her magnificent memory, combined with her clear insight into his mind and her own intensive grasp of the characters and situations, made it easy for her to fill up these blanks at home. * * * And so the book sped on. Five to ten thousand words would be thus transcribed before either was well aware of the flight of time." The book must have been finished within a week or a fortnight and been a fat one at that, and we do not see why Francis Grey should not have been a most fortunate novelist if only there had not been complications.

But Ida Dexter, a young woman of enormous wealth, superlative beauty and tremendous will power, came over from America and married Francis in spite of himself, and sent the lady secretary, whom he really loved and who of course loved him, about her business, and presently Ida was found dead in the summer house by the lake with a bullet hole in her temple, and Francis was suspected, and it might have gone very ill indeed with him had not Quick, the American gardener, who had caught cold from being in the lake and from not removing his wet clothes before he went to bed, sent for Silence when he was lying at the point of death and proved conclusively to her that he was Ida's real and only lawful husband, that he had married her years before in America, and that he had shot her, a deed for which he was sorry, though there had been strong reasons for its performance.

So Francis was exonerated, and he and Silence may have produced many novels after they were married, though the story does not say so.

### Nansen's Geographical Researches.

It is a work of erudition and not an account of exploration that Dr. Fridtjof Nansen offers his readers in the two handsome quarto volumes of "In Northern Mists" (Frederick A. Stokes Company). When Dr. J. Scott Keltie asked him to write a book on Arctic discoveries, he probably had no idea that the Teutonic instincts continued so strongly in the Scandinavian blood. Dr. Nansen felt bound to be thorough, and to do that, as a matter of course, he had to go back to the beginnings. He goes so far back that at the end of these two entertaining volumes he barely reaches the point at which Arctic exploration, as we generally understand it, begins. We trust they will not share the fate of countless German works of learning in which the authors spent so much time on origins that they never were able to deal with the subject itself and left behind them only massive fragments.

The main portion of Dr. Nansen's work consists in examining closely myths and legends relating to the Northland and the Western sea, in order to extract from them whatever particles of geographic or historic truth they may contain. It is a fascinating task, made more attractive by the author's ingenuity. The book divides itself naturally into two chief parts: the investigation of the beliefs of classical antiquity, of Pytheas of Marseilles and his predecessors, regarding Thule and the other indefinite outlying regions, and that of the sagas and other mediæval legends that relate to the discovery of Greenland, Iceland, and especially Vinland and America. On the merits of Dr. Nansen's conjectures experts must decide; the reader will discover that he is modest in his statement of his deductions and not at all inclined to be dogmatic. He will find also that Dr. Nansen is inclined to pass briefly over ascertained historical facts in order to discuss at greater length the doubtful and debatable matters.

Norwegian and German authorities he quotes freely, but he seems unacquainted with the mass of American literature on the discovery of the continent by the Norsemen, so admirably epitomized in Winsor's "Critical History." This may impair somewhat the scientific value of his arguments, but it gives them the quality of individual and independent investigations. At the end he deals with the Cabot and Cortereal voyages. The book is illustrated abundantly with excellent reproductions of early maps, which are very fully discussed, and with interesting pictures. It makes an excellent introduction for the story of Arctic exploration on which we trust Dr. Nansen will soon enter.

### H. G. Wells Illustrated by A. L. Coburn.

The short stories in which Mr. H. G. Wells mingles science with the supernatural are in their way little masterpieces, and Mr. Alvin Langdon Coburn with his light effects has turned photography into one of the fine arts; the combination of the two in "The Door in the Wall and Other Stories" (Mitchell Kennerley, New York) is interesting and curious, but hardly satisfactory. A thin folio volume, with a page that will delight the eyes of any one who cares for beautiful print, contains eight good, but not new, stories by Mr. Wells, with ten beautiful photogravures from photographs by Mr. Coburn, the size of the page providing the latter with a border wide enough to exhibit their artistic excellence.

It may seem to many that so sumptuous a setting is out of place with material of this quality, but that is after all a matter of taste. The fault we have to find is that the pictures, beautiful as they are, do not illustrate. Being photographs, they are taken from nature and can be connected only with casual, unimportant phrases in the text; they really jar with it. Most of them are so lovely, however, that they can be enjoyed without the context, and the lover of books will derive a purely sensual pleasure by just looking at the pages and the type without trying to read. Mr. Wells's tales suffer from the incongruous excess of art.

### The Law of the Scottish Border.

Perhaps one in a hundred doctor dissertations by its merits justifies the publication of these academic exercises. In "The Administration of the English Borders During the Reign of Elizabeth" (University of Pennsylvania; Appletons) Dr. Charles A. Coulomb has selected a subject that is extremely interesting in itself, that can be treated adequately within restricted limits and that has not been handled methodically before. He contributes materially to the knowledge of a subject that has a romantic interest in literature and history alike.

He begins by describing the geography of the border between Scotland and England; he next describes the authority of the Wardens of the Marches, the border "law" they administered, their courts, the measures for defending the borders and the ways of raising money. It is all put compactly and clearly, and is backed by judicious references to the authorities. The little book will be helpful to those who read the old ballads and to those who read Scott; it throws light on many points in English and Scottish history, and is thoroughly interesting in itself. It should be distributed among the universities as a model of what a doctor dissertation should be.

### Plain Truths About Italy.

The method taken by Federico Garlanda, author of "The New Italy" (G. P. Putnam's Sons), which M. E. Wood has translated, will irritate many Italians and at times will annoy American readers. He criticises present conditions in Italy, not overkindly, in letters professing to be written by an American, and makes many comparisons between what is evil in Italy and what is good, or ought to be good, in the United States. His view of things American is often unduly rosy as that of things Italian is too black. Notwithstanding this the book conveys a great deal of valuable information to readers who know something of Italy and can use some discrimination.

The evils the author describes all exist, though the causes he assigns for them may not be wholly correct, for he is inclined to epigrammatic summarizing and does not let facts interfere with his theories. There are plenty of reckless statements, some of which are corrected in the notes, and many other inaccuracies. The author's political views color the whole book, which was intended as a sort of appeal to the nation and not as a historical description. He does say a great deal about Italy, however, which it is hard to find in books and which the judicious reader will find valuable. With all his criticisms the author is thoroughly Italian, with all the enthusiasms and many of the prejudices of his countrymen.

### President Angell.

Though it is natural that in "The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell" (Longmans, Green and Company) the author should dwell with complacency on his life work, which made him distinguished, the years he spent as president of the University of Michigan and the public services in which he was employed, the reader will regret that this should take up so much of his brief volume, for these things are all matters of record which others could tell almost as well as Dr. Angell himself.

Of the story that he alone can relate there is too little; we should like to hear of more of the early frugal years when he was preparing for college, more of the student life at Brown and of his classmates, more of the extremely interesting journey he took through the South before the war, and more of his newspaper life in Providence. These are the memories that will attract his readers. He, reasonably enough, gives more importance to his experiences as Minister to China and to Turkey, as commissioner on Canadian treaties and as president of the universities of Vermont and of Michigan. Dr. Angell is interesting as far as he goes; his brevity and reticence, however, will rather provoke his readers, for there is so much more that he only could tell about almost every subject he touches upon.

### Some New Fiction.

An artful and well written detective story is Mr. Frederic Arnold Kummer's "The Green God" (W. J. Watt and Company, New York), but there is something lacking in it. The opening chapter, which leads the hero into the tangle that must be unravelled, is natural and spirited. Suspicion regarding the mysterious death is distributed ingeniously so that the reader repeatedly believes he has solved the puzzle, remembering other mystery stories he has read, only to find himself mistaken, and the solution is clever. Yet somehow the interest in the story is pretty slight; it reads like a well done composition, strictly following the rules, written for some college professor of the art of fiction.

Though the heroine of "Her Husband," by Julia Magruder (Small, Maynard and Company, Boston), may strike the reader at the beginning as a somewhat shameless and designing flirt, which detracts from the effectiveness of the ardent love making under Italian skies, she soon becomes the abject adorer of the man she loves. Her painful awakening to his many faults, his obstinacy and stinginess, may be drawn from the experience of other American girls who have married hastily foreign husbands. The author's solution of that international problem might be interesting, but the author begs the question. The two part and after many years apparently come together again, the wife finding that the man has lost his faults and acquired all the virtues that her imagination had endowed him with. The husband is dead, however, and the man she mistakes for him is his twin brother, with whom she lives happily ever after. The first part of the story reads like a satire on British husbands; the point of the second part we do not make out. It may be a demonstration of psychological insight, the woman having discerned faintly in the first brother the attributes of the other which really attracted her. It would have been better art if she had worked out her psychology in one man; the twin device seems clumsy. Some people will think it improper.

There is good work in Grace Miller White's "From the Valley of the Missing" (W. J. Watt and Company). No French realism has exceeded in brutality the scenes on the canalboat which she paints; her boatman is as complete and consistent a blackguard as we have met with in fiction. Wherever she speaks of evil and wrongdoers she shows the same power. Apparently the "Jukes" still survive in central New York, but we should be sorry to generalize from the specimens here presented about the general character of canalboat men and squatters in the neighborhood of Ithaca. When the author deals with good people she is weak and sentimental; apparently she has strong faith in heredity. Her two kidnapped twins are interesting at the start, but their goodness is as unnatural as the continued brutality of the man who stole them. The book degenerates into cheap melodrama as it progresses.

A grim short story, written by Emile Zola in the days when he was an idealist, the period of the "Contes à Ninon," has been translated by Alison M. Lederer, with two other insignificant tales, under the title "For a Night" (Brown Brothers, Philadelphia). The use of a good dictionary would have saved the translator some blunders. "Mules," for instance, means slippers; but the story is too powerful in its perversity to be spoiled even by poor translation.

An artificial tale of adventure, clumsy in construction and clumsy in the affected jauntiness of the telling, is "The Highwayman" by Guy Rawlence (W. J. Watt and Company). It is a medley of conventional eighteenth century episodes.

### Stanford on Composition.

In his "Musical Composition, a Short Treatise for Students" (Macmillans), Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, the distinguished English musician, has turned out an eminently practical book. As he properly says, no one can teach another to compose, but courses in "composition" are included in the schedules of all conservatories. These courses aim to instruct students in the routine of composition, to the end that their inventions may not carry them into inextricable difficulties.

It is by no means easy to explain lucidly the routine of composition, and nowhere else has a better attempt been made toward this end than in this excellent little volume. Its propositions are laid down with moderation, and while the author is undoubtedly a conservative, whose notions will displease some of the modern explorers, his cool poise of mind will give deep satisfaction to those who do not forget that a building must be reared upon its foundations, and that not even Richard Strauss or Max Reger has been able to ignore the fundamental laws of art which mastered both Beethoven and Wagner.

This text book may be confidently recommended to teachers who are anxious to find a convenient compendium of the subject of composition and to students who believe it possible to study the matter without the aid of a master. To the latter it will at any rate point out the pitfalls around which an experienced craftsman alone can guide them.

### Modern British Pottery.

A deviation from the usual art books is the description of an important contemporary British industry, which turns out artistic products that the collectors of the future will hunt for, that Mr. J. F. Blacker has written in "Nineteenth Century English Ceramic Art" (Little Brown and Company). The author's starting point is the Great Exposition in London of 1851, though he goes into the past in telling the history of the several manufacturers, Doulton, Minton, Wedgwood, Boote, Copeland, Adams, De Morgan and the rest. His arrangement is in the main geographical, though he begins with the chief pottery towns. He deals almost wholly with England, but at the end gives a brief sketch of the industry in the other portions of Great Britain and Ireland.

Mr. Blacker describes in detail the products of each manufacturer and accompanies his descriptions with many illustrations of the ware they turn out. His accounts are clear and appreciative; he is fully informed about his subject and makes it very interesting.

### Books About China.

A series of popular and entertaining articles on many phases of Chinese life by a man who spent many years in China will be found in Mr. J. Dyer Ball's "The Chinese at Home" (Fleming H. Revell Company). The author was in the civil service at Hongkong and therefore looks at the land and people with other than missionary eyes. At the same time he preserved his British ideas, or perhaps took into consideration the prejudices of the British public which he was addressing, and allows this to color his narrative somewhat. He puts many things about the Chinese, however, simply and clearly, their beliefs, their customs, their government, their character, the condition and the resources of the country and touches on the changes that are taking place. He has the great merit of holding the reader's attention and of amusing him while he informs him. The book is illustrated with photographs and with quaint colored Chinese pictures.

A straightforward account of "The Education of Women in China" has been written by Margaret E. Burton (Fleming H. Revell Company). She tells of the beginnings seventy years ago, of the development of the early teaching and the change in Chinese ideas regarding the education of woman, and of the many schools now established, not only by foreign missionaries, but by the Government and by private beneficence of the Chinese. The book is naturally largely a record of missionary effort and is imbued with the missionary spirit, but the author looks at her subject from the broader point of view of education and of the improvement of woman's condition and gives much valuable and interesting information.

The "Intellectual and Political Currents in the Far East," by Prof. Paul S. Reinsch (Houghton Mifflin Company), includes India and Japan, as well as China, in its survey. It is a philosophical and theoretical treatise that endeavors to present Asiatic life as a unity. In so far as it describes what is going on the book has a value, but while, possibly, it may be permissible to generalize about Indian politics, it certainly seems too early to do any thing of the sort about China, and, we rather believe, about Japan.

### The 1912 Reference Annuals.

The nearness of the new year is heralded by the arrival of the 1912 editions of the various almanacs, hand books and annuals, which have proved their worth and accuracy and are the steady standby for men who seek information in a hurry. It is needless to describe them to those who use them; those who do not make life needlessly burdensome.

Our old friend "Whitaker's Almanack" (Joseph Whitaker, London), appearing for the forty-fourth time, admits now on its title page that it supplies information about the whole world, "particularly the British Empire and the United States." It again breaks its resolution not to enlarge and has 66 pages more than the last edition. Several new articles on matters of recent interest have been added; among these we note "Aviation" and "Sport in the United States," while the space devoted to the United States has been increased materially. Many of the established departments have been augmented as well as brought up to date; others have been arranged better and made clearer. It requires ingenuity however, to improve "Whitaker." The changes and additional information are as recent as the middle of November.

The venerable "Almanach de Gotha" (Justus Perthes, Gotha; Lemcke and Buechner), in its scarlet and gold livery, appears for the 149th time and next year will celebrate another anniversary. We hope that may be made the occasion for an enlargement of the page, the form in which the advent of the new century, and before that the creation of the German Empire, were celebrated by the Almanach, for in thickness it has well nigh reached the limit. This might do away with the annoying necessity of referring to past editions for information. The present number is particularly valuable because it gives for the first time the census figures which were obtained last year in almost all the countries of Europe. The many changes called for to bring the personal and statistical information up to date have been made, ending with the middle of November. The portraits are of the King and Queen of Spain, the Regent of Bavaria and the late M. Stolypin. The editors, in the preface, decline to place Tripoli just now among the Italian possessions, with perfect propriety; the date of the conclusion of the Moroccan negotiation is a valid typographical excuse for leaving Morocco among the independent States, but the German reluctance to add it to the French protectorates may be inferred from the phrase used. The Almanach de Gotha remains the chief source of information about royalty and the higher nobility, the personnel of administration and diplomacy, and recent statistics of Europe.

That useful handbook "Hazell's Annual" (Hazell, Watson and Viney, London), now edited by Hammond Hall, has improved vastly of late years in the arrangement and quality of its contents. Especially valuable are its clear and careful summaries of the questions that immediately interest the British public. In this volume, for instance, we have the full text of the Parliament bill by which the power of the Lords was restricted; an elaborate digest of Mr. Lloyd George's insurance bill, with explanation of state insurance in other countries; the substance of Mr. Gladstone's two home rule bills, arranged in parallel columns, and the reciprocity treaty that Canada would not accept. There are articles on labor unrest, on the railway strike, on the cost of living, on the political disturbances in Europe and Asia, besides the departments that appear from year to year. In the final "additional pages" an event is recorded that happened December 3, which is remarkable in a book that came to hand in New York, completely finished, on December 15.

From A. and C. Black, London, we have received "Who's Who, 1912," more plethoric by 120 pages than last year's edition; the pages run up to almost 2,400 now. With years the collection of brief biographies has expanded beyond the original narrow classification; it includes now nearly every one of note in Great Britain and a less miscellaneous assortment of foreigners than it once had. Within its scope it is a very convenient book. The notices have been corrected up to September 1. If the book keeps on growing the size of the page will have to be enlarged, for there is no room for widening the girth of the volume.

### Other Books.

In the first pages of his "Observations on the Magdalen Islands" (New York State Education Department, Albany), in which he describes that interesting group and tells its history, Dr. John M. Clarke, the State geologist, hides away, as usual, literary matter that many people would like to read. It is an official report, however, and he is obliged to turn at once to the thorough description of the geology of the islands and of the fossils the rocks contain.

A very respectable anthology has been compiled by Prof. H. G. Fiedler in "The Oxford Book of German Verse" (the Clarendon Press; Henry Frowde). The selection is somewhat academic in that the criterion seems to have been the reputation of the author rather than the merits of the poem; there is proportionately too much of Goethe and Schiller and too little of Heine, for instance, and even if Gerhart Hauptmann wrote the preface that hardly justifies the inclusion of so much of his verse. There are names also, justly famous in prose and science, which hardly belong to poetry. The poems chosen, however, are generally celebrated ones and fairly representative of the lyrical side of the authors' talent. The early pieces are so few that it would be more fit to say that the anthology begins with Luther than with the twelfth century. The selections from authors of the last fifty years show little character, but that is not the editor's fault; we condole with him for reading the lyrical verse from which he had to choose. For academical purposes Prof. Fiedler's anthology is admirable, but we must still await a new Palgrave, who may do for German and French what he did for English lyric poetry.

Blank verse is employed by Marguerite Merrington in "Picture Plays" (Duffield and Company) to convey the impressions or the fancies produced by seven well known pictures. The author uses her medium fluently but with little dramatic effect, though possibly the little plays may be tried in amateur or parlor theatricals. We could wish at this time that she had left out the Mona Lisa, a reproduction of which simpers on the cover of the book.

In a small volume, "The Real Palestine of To-day" (The John C. Winston Company, Philadelphia), Dr. Lewis Gaston Leary personally conducts the reader through the Holy Land with a good deal of intelligence, though his constant effort to be popular and understood by every one is annoying at times. He touches on the history later than Bible times, he has a good deal to say about the people who live there now and the country and he provides a large number of interesting pictures. Much of his space is devoted naturally to Jerusalem and its vicinity.

A very interesting story is told in the brief biography of "Chundra Lela" by the Rev. Z. F. Griffin (The Griffith and Rowlands Press, Philadelphia). She was a Hindu child widow who became an ascetic, was converted to Christianity and travelled about India as a missionary preacher. Her own story is as remarkable as her career; where her biographer is obliged to deviate from it, or to annotate, the tone and style are distinctly lower.

Very briefly Dr. William Barry Meany puts together the facts relating to the life and career of a distinguished American naval officer in "Commodore John Barry, the Father of the American Navy" (Harpers). A more careful arrangement of the material would have made the biography clearer. The author believes that Congress should have Barry's remains removed to a more accessible and public place and should erect over them a monument worthy of his deserts.

The story of an interesting experiment carried on for seven years with success on the East Side is told by Alice Minnie Herts in "The Children's Educational Theatre" (Harpers). The book was written as an answer to many inquiries addressed to the author. She adds articles by several writers on the educational value of the drama and ends with a plea for the endowment of the atres such as she describes.

It seems that more than half the grammar school children who enter the high schools drop out by the end of the first year and a large proportion of the remainder never graduate. An investigation into the facts and the reasons has been made by Dr. Joseph King Van Denburg and is published as "Causes of the Elimination of Students in Public Secondary Schools of New York City" by the Teachers College of Columbia University, New York. The report is unfortunately chiefly statistical; in that light we should imagine that more statistics would be required before generalizing. The more serious reasons, such as the need of going to work, the disinclination to go on and so forth almost disappear among the figures. The author's main conclusions seem to be sound; that the high school course should be shortened and that the curriculum should be better adapted to the needs of the people and should be less variegated.

In "History and Organization of Criminal Statistics in the United States" (Houghton Mifflin Company) Prof. Louis Newton Robinson gives an account of how the statistics have been and are collected by the Federal Government and by the several States, and criticises present methods.

### Books Received.

"The Civil War Literature of Ohio." Daniel J. Ryan. (The Burrows Brothers Company, Cleveland.)

"California, Its History and Romance." John S. McGroarty. (Grafton Publishing Company, Los Angeles.

"Pervigilium Veneris." Elizabeth Hickman du Bois, Ph. D. (Elm Tree Press, Woodstock, Vt.)

"Shakespeare on the Stage." William Winter. (Moffat, Yard and Company.)

"A Retrospect of Forty Years." William Allen Butler. (Charles Scribner's Sons.)

"The Formation of the Republican Party." Gordon S. P. Kleeberg, Ph. D. (The Moods Publishing Company, New York.)

"In the Cave of Aladdin." John P. Cowger. (James A. Jenkins, New York.)

"A Handbook of Health." Woods Hutchinson, M. D. (Houghton Mifflin Company.)

"Al 'Ethnikai Thermopylai." John A. Booras. (The author, New York.)

"The Way of Peace." Reginald Wright Kauffman. (Moffat, Yard and Company.)

"The Good Old Days." Charles Wheeler Bell. (A. C. McClurg and Company, Chicago.)

"An Open Letter to the Right Hon. David Lloyd George, M. P." Arthur Kitson. (J. M. Dent and Sons, London.)

"Dreams of Yesterday." Henry E. Harman. (The State Company, Columbia, S. C.)

"In a Portuguese Garden and Other Verse." Cara E. Whiton-Stone. (Sherman, French and Company, Boston.)

"Vagrant Verse." Charles Kinney. (The F. J. Heer Printing Company, Columbus, Ohio.)

"Neptune's Icie and Other Plays." John Jay Chapman. (Moffat, Yard and Company.)

"Foam Flowers." Stephen Berrien Stanton. (Moffat, Yard and Company.)

"The Human Fantasy." John Hall Wheelock. (Sherman, French and Company.)